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THE NINE WORTHIES

Professor Abel Lefranc in his book *Sous le Masque de "William Shakespeare"*¹ contends that the plays we generally attribute to Shakespeare were, in reality, the work of William Stanley, sixth Earl of Derby. This contention is supported not only by an examination of the Derby family and its relation to the theaters of the day, but also by a study of *Love's Labour's Lost*, *Hamlet*, *As You Like It*, and *The Tempest*, in which the author points out that Stanley was the writer. It will be the purpose of this paper to point out one case where Professor Lefranc's reasoning is at fault. In chapter vi, dealing with *Love's Labour's Lost*, there is an attempt to prove that the Masque of the Nine Worthies (V, ii) is directly indebted to Richard Lloyd's poem on these heroes of romance.² Lloyd's poem consists of a short description of each of the Nine Worthies, followed by a series of nine monologues in which each hero explains who he is and what are the foundations for his fame. There is also a short moral added to each monologue.

I

M. Lefranc first calls our attention to the personnel of the group both in *Love's Labour's Lost* and in Lloyd's poem. The latter contains the conventional Nine: Hector, Alexander, Julius Caesar, Josua, Daniel, Judas Maccabaeus, Arthur, Charles, and Guy of Warwick.³ In Shakespeare, however, we find only five Worthies—Pompey, Alexander, Judas, Hercules, and Hector, only three of whom are found in the conventional grouping. It is clear at once that Alexander, Judas, and Hector are the only ones finding a parallel in Lloyd's poem. Pompey and Hercules, therefore, as far as the

¹ Abel Lefranc, *Sous le Masque de "William Shakespeare"* William Stanley VI Comte de Derby. 2 vols. Paris, 1919.

² Richard Lloyd, *A briefe discourse of the most renowned actes, and right valiant conquests of those puissant Princes, called the Nine Worthies*. London, 1584.

³ Guy of Warwick was sometimes substituted for Godfrey of Bouloigne. See Francis Douce, *Illustrations of Shakespeare*, I, 243.

1584 poem is concerned, are rank outsiders. M. Lefranc does not comment on this strange difference; he finds proof that Alexander, Judas, and Hector come straight from Lloyd, but he fails to explain the origin of Pompey and Hercules. Indeed, it would be difficult to say just why Shakespeare did include them. It is true, as a study of the references to the Nine Worthies will show, that the personnel of the group changed from time to time, a tenth slipping in or a new hero taking the place of an old one. Professor Hart¹ suggests that the inclusion of Hercules may be due to the fact that Whetstone in *Promos and Cassandra* mentions Hercules in connection with the Nine Worthies, although he does not identify him as one of them.² We can, however, only conjecture as to Shakespeare's reasons. But M. Lefranc, in order to make his case sound, must not only point out the resemblances between Lloyd's poem and the masque, but he must also account for the differences. If the dramatist used Lloyd, why did he choose only three of the group and add two new ones? On this point the author is silent, except that he feels that the masque ends prematurely, cut short by the message of the king's death. But this, instead of explaining the presence of Pompey and Hercules, makes their inclusion still less indicative of Lloyd's influence.

II

Professor Lefranc's next argument is to show that the pageant in *Loves' Labour's Lost* is drawn from Lloyd's poem because each of the Worthies in the latter announces himself as follows:

Josua: I am the worthie conqueror Duke Josua the great

Hector: I am Hector the Peerelesse prince king Priamus eldest sonne

David: I am David most daughte of deed, the king of Israell

Alexander: I am the great and worthie king, the prince of peerelesse might

And in *Love's Labour's Lost*:

Costard: I Pompey am

Nathaniel: When in the world I lived, I was the world's commander

Holofernes: Judas, I am

¹ *Love's Labour's Lost* (ed. by H. C. Hart, Indianapolis, 1906), p. 119.

² Whetstone, *Promos and Cassandra*, Part II, I, iv.

Now, as a matter of fact, this form of announcing characters is conventional. In the stanzas that accompany the mural paintings of the Nine Worthies in the Castle of Manta in Piedmont (*ca.* 1430) we find these words,¹

Ector: Je fui de troie nee et fis du roy Priam
E fuy gant Menelas e la gregoire gans
Vindrer asegiar Troie a cumpagne grant;
Alisandre: Jay coquis por ma force les illes d'outramer
Judas: Je viens en Jerusalem, en la grant region
Roy Artus: Je fui roy de Bertagne, d'Escosa e d'Anglaterra
Charlemaine: Je fui roy, emperaire, e fuy nee de France
Godfroy de Bouglon: Je fuy Dus de Lorraine apres mes ancesours

In the *Verses on Earliest Woodblock* (1454) the Worthies speak thus,²

Hector de Troye: Je suis Hector de Troie ou li povoir fu grans
Le Roy Artus: Je fuy roy de Bretagne, d'Escoche et d' Engleterre
Godfroy de Buillon: Je fu duc de Buillon dont je maintins l'onour

In the Coventry pageant of 1455 we find the following:³

Hector: Most pleasant pnces recordid that may be
I hector of troy that am chefe conqueror
Alex.: I alexander that for chyvalry berithe the balle
Josue: I Josue that in hebrewe reyn principall
David: I Daid that
Judas: I Judas that
Arthur: I Arthur kyng crownyd
Charles: I Charles chefe cheftan
Julius: I Julius cesar
Godfride: I Godfride of Bolloyn kyng of Jerusalem

In the Woodcuts of the Hotel de Ville at Metz (1460) we find Godfrey speaking as follows:⁴

Je fus duc de lorraine apres men ancessours

¹ See R.S. Loomis, "Verses on the Nine Worthies," *Modern Philology*, XV, 211.

² See I. Gallancz, *The Parlement of the Thre Ages* (London, 1915), Appendix XIV.

³ See Thomas Sharp, *A dissertation on the Pageants Performed at Coventry*, Coventry (1825), p. 148.

⁴ See Loomis, *op. cit.*, p. 213.

And in the *Schwerttanzspiel aus Lübeck* the characters announce themselves thus:¹

Kaiser Karl: De Romesche keiser bün ik genant

Josua: Got let vör mi di sünne stan

Hector: Ik hebbe fochten al mennigen strid

David: Ik slög den risen Goliath dot

Alexander: De gansse werlt al umme lang mit minen ssepter ik bedwang.

In summing up this phase of his argument, Professor Lefranc says,²

On peut dire, en tenant compte de l'allure ridicule donc Shakespeare argémente ses neuf Preux, que le procédé et le ton sont les mêmes: ton glorieux et emphatique, sérieux chez Lloyd, burlesque chez Shakespeare, comme l'exigent la conduite et la caractère de sa pièce.

But it is evident from the foregoing references that the style and tone used by Lloyd are not unique; they are, indeed, common to many poems and pageants on the Nine Worthies. As to the burlesque atmosphere of Shakespeare's masque being a satire, as Lefranc implies, on Lloyd's "serious" poem, we need only point again to the references cited to say that the dramatist was in all probability satirizing pageants in general rather than one poem in particular.

III

Following M. Lefranc's argument, we find that his next point rests on the resemblance between the portrayal of Hector by Lloyd and the burlesque picture of the same Worthy in *Love's Labour's Lost*. In the play we get the following picture of Hector.

Biron: Hide thy head, Achilles: here comes Hector in arms.

Dum.: Though my mocks may come back on me, I will now be merry.

King: Hector was but a Trojan in respect to this.

Boyet: But is this Hector?

King: I think Hector was not so clean-timbered.

Long.: His leg is too big for Hector's.

Dum.: More calf, certain.

Boyet: No; he is best indued in the small.

Biron: This cannot be Hector.

Dum.: He's a god or a painter; for he makes faces.

¹ See *Zeitschrift für Deutsches Alterthum*, XX, 10.

² *Op. cit.*, II, 21.

The following quotation is taken from the descriptive part of Lloyd's poem that precedes the nine monologues,

Hector was indifferent tall, well compact and strong withall,
 Courteous, quick, and deliure of might, in armes a very
 goodly knight;
 His head was white and curled I finde, his beard was white,
 he was sandblinde,
 And somewhat he did lispe also, a gentler wight no man
 might know;
 He bore two Lyons combatand, or in asure (I vnderstand).

In commenting on the two passages, M. Lefranc says, "Il est clair que le premier portrait se présente une charge humoristique du second."¹ But one cannot, for two reasons, say with certainty that Shakespeare's description is a "charge humoristique" of Lloyd's Worthy. In the first place the lines, "I think Hector was not so clean-timbered. . . . His leg is too big for Hector's. . . . More calf certain" are at the best only very clumsy and shadowy allusions to Lloyd's words, "Hector was indifferent tall, well compact and strong withall." The Shakespearean lines seem to be much more effective simply as witty repartee on the part of the king and his court concerning the traditional conception of Hector and the ludicrous appearance of Armado in the guise of the Trojan hero than as a caricature of Lloyd's Worthy.

In the second place, if the Shakespearean passage is a burlesque on Lloyd's lines, why did Shakespeare, consummate artist and keen humorist that he was, fail to use the comic material at hand? Why, for instance, did he pass by the excellent opportunities for burlesque offered by Hector's sandblindness and his lisp? Physical deformities and infirmities have always, from the earliest comic passages in the moralities down to the present day, been the stock in trade for the writer of burlesque. It is mere conjecture, of course, but it seems incredible that the playwright, had he been using Lloyd's poem as a basis for his masque, would have satirized so vaguely Hector's stature and have missed completely his dimmed vision and his speech impediment.

¹ *Op. cit.*, II, 23.

IV

In his final argument, M. Lefranc finds what he considers a conclusive proof in the resemblance between the two passages on Alexander. The part of Lloyd's poem quoted by M. Lefranc is as follows:

Alexander:

And say myselfe a conquerour vnto the worlds end,

 And marched backe to Babylon, triumphing as a God,
 Where all the princes, of the east for me made abod.
 For ouer all the orient I was the soueraigne Lord.

 This puissant prince and conqueror bare in his shield a
 Lyon or,
 Which sitting in a chaire hent a battel axe in his paw argent.

And in *Love's Labour's Lost*:

When in the world I lived, I was the world's commander;
 By east, west, north, and south, I spread my conquering might:
 My scutcheon plain declares that I am Alisander.

Later Costard says to Nathaniel,

O, sir, you have overthrown Alisander the conqueror. You will be scraped out of the painted cloth for this: your lion, that holds his poll axe sitting on a close stool, will be given to Ajax: he will be the ninth Worthy.

It will be seen that there are two points of contact in the foregoing passages. First, the arms born by Alexander are the same in Lloyd and in Shakespeare; and second, the Worthy's words in both cases are similar. In the Harlian MS No. 2259, reprinted in *Notes and Queries*, Series 7, Vol. VIII, p. 22, we find a poem on the Nine Worthies together with the heraldic arms they bore. The following information is given concerning Alexander: "Alexander, rex paganus, and ante incarnationem. Messidonie. he bere goules a lyon' gold, soyaunt in a cheyre syluer, enbatellyd with a pollax sabill." And Gerard Legh, in his *Accedence of Armorie*, printed in 1591, contemporaneous with *Love's Labour's Lost*, describes Alexander's arms thus:¹ "Geules, a Lion Or, seiante in a Chayer, holding a battle axe Argent."

¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 22 ff.

With these two passages indicating that Alexander's arms *usually* contained a golden lion seated in a chair holding a battle axe, the resemblance between Lloyd's description and Shakespeare's dwindles in significance and proves nothing.

It has been pointed out that Alexander's words in Lloyd and in *Love's Labour's Lost* are similar. But this does not prove that the playwright used Lloyd as a source, for in many of the references to the Nine Worthies, there are expressed the same ideas concerning Alexander that appear in Lloyd and Shakespeare. Glancing back at the passages quoted above, we find in both that Alexander says he has conquered the world and has been victorious in all the points of the compass. Let us then examine other references to see if these ideas are expressed elsewhere.

In a Latin hymn of the eleventh century¹ Alexander is spoken of as "rex maximus." In the *Cursor Mundi* (early XIV Century) Alexander is "the conqueroure."²

Jacques Longuyon (*ca.* 1312) describes Alexander thus,³

Alixandre le large, dont je vois ci parlant,
Qui vainqui Nicholas et Daire le persant
Et occist la vermine des desers d'Orient
Et saisi Babyloine le fort cité plaisant
Ou il morut après par enpoisonnement.

The Parlement of the Thre Ages (*ca.* 1350) devotes seventy-two lines to Alexander, the first of which are,

After this sir Alysaunder alle the worlde wanne,
Both the see and the sonde and the sadde erthe.

From the *Morte Arthure* (*ca.* 1380) attributed to Huchown we take this line, "The eldeste was Alexandere, that alle the erthe lowttede."⁴

In *This World Is Verra Vanite* (end of fourteenth century) we find these lines,

Alexander that all to bowis
To tak tribut of town & tre.⁵

¹ See Gollancz, *op. cit.*, Appendix I.

² See *Cursor Mundi*, Prologue, line 6; Gollancz, *op. cit.*, Appendix IV.

³ See *Les Voeux du Paon*; Gollancz, *op. cit.*, Appendix VI.

⁴ See Gollancz, *op. cit.*, Appendix VIII.

⁵ *Op. cit.*, Appendix IX.

The following couplet¹ expressing the usual idea, comes from the Prologue to the prose *Alexander* (end of the fourteenth century):

Mir ist wol gelungen;
Al de werlt han ek bedwungen.

Alexander's speech on the mural paintings in the Castle of La Manta in Piedmont (1430) shows the traditional conqueror.²

Jay coquis por ma force les illes d'outramer;
D'Orient jusques a Ocident fuge ja sire apeles.
Jay tue roy Daire, Porus, Nicole larmires;
La grant Babiloina fige ver moy encliner;
E fuy sire du monde; puis fui enarbres.

In the Scotch poem (ca. 1440) *Ane Ballet of the Nine Nobles*³ we find these lines,

In XII jeres wan throw hard feichtyng
Al landis vnder the formament.

And the Coventry pageant of 1455⁴ contains this stanza:

I alexander that for chyvalry berithe the balle
Most curi in conquest thro the world am y named.

From these references it is plain that Alexander was traditionally spoken of as the conqueror of the world. There is no need of quoting more, although further references of the foregoing type may be found in Gollancz, Appendix XIV; in R. S. Loomis' article in *Modern Philology*, Vol. XV; in the Tanner MS No. 407, reprinted in the Furness Variorum edition of *Love's Labour's Lost*, p. 283; in the Harlian MS No. 2259, reprinted in *Notes and Queries*, Series 7, Vol. VIII, 22; and in the *Schwerttanzspiel Aus Lübeck*, printed in *Zeitschrift für Deutsches Alterthum*, XX, 10-13. This mass of evidence is adequate to show that the writer of the burlesque masque in *Love's Labour's Lost* was simply following tradition in regard to Alexander and was not necessarily indebted to Richard Lloyd.

¹ *Op. cit.*, Appendix XV.

² See R. S. Loomis, *Modern Philology*, XV, 211.

³ Laing's *Select Remains* or Gollancz, *op. cit.*, Appendix X.

⁴ Sharp, *Dissertation on Pageants*, p. 148.

V

We have now examined each of M. Lefranc's arguments in his theory that Lloyd furnished the source of Shakespeare's masque and have in each case attempted to relieve Lloyd of any responsibility. This theory is essential to M. Lefranc's main contention that Stanley wrote the plays. Having, as he thinks, proved that Lloyd's poem furnished the dramatist's source for the masque, he proceeds to show that Lloyd was Stanley's tutor, that the two visited Navarre together, that while there Stanley secured his local color for the play, and that Lloyd furnished the pedantic type seen in the character of Holofernes. His argument seems to be:

Lloyd had a great influence on Stanley.

Lloyd's poem influenced the author of *Love's Labour's Lost*.

Therefore, Stanley wrote *Love's Labour's Lost*.

But if we have succeeded in proving that Lloyd's poem did not necessarily influence the author of the play, then we cease to care how much Lloyd influenced Stanley. This study, then, furnishes two conclusions. First, it has shown that the author of *Love's Labour's Lost*, in writing the burlesque masque, followed a conventional and general conception of the Nine Worthies rather than Richard Lloyd's poem of 1584; and, therefore, second, as far as M. Lefranc's argument is concerned, William Stanley, sixth Earl of Derby, did not write the play.

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